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STATEMENT ON EAST-TIMOR

TO THE UN-COMMITTEE OF 24

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Mr. Chairman,

Before I begin my statement, I would like to express my appreciation of being given this opportunity to testify before the Special Committee on Decolonization with respect to East-Timor. My name is Hans van der Veen and I have come to convey the views of the Indonesia Committee, an independent Dutch human rights organization, concerned with the victims of the Indonesian military regime under its president, general Suharto.

Mr. Chairman,

Last year, on 15 august, the former apostolic administrator of the Roman Catholic Church in East-Timor (1977-1983) Mgr. Da Costa Lopes testified from personal experience in his speech to this Committee:

"Despite the great imbalance of forces, the East-Timorese people have such pride in the defense of their country, that they prefer to die in the line of battle against Indonesia rather than be alive as passive slaves and victims of what can only be called Indonesian colonialism".

The war in East-Timor has been going on for almost twelve years. After the loss of about 200.000 of their compatriots - victims of the military invasion and occupation of their country - the remaining East-Timorese are forced to take part in a massive campaign of birth-control. In this way the Indonesians also try to reduce the numbers of East-Timorese, whose country has already been invaded by about 50.000 Indonesian colonizers.

Among these 50.000 Indonesians there are about 15.000 military. These are the regular occupying forces. Sometimes their numbers are increased, which happened last autumn, when Indonesia launched a big military campaign to crush Fretilin guerrilla-fighters. This campaign was called 'KIKIS', meaning extinction. It did, however, fail entirely in extinguishing the freedom-fighters, as did all the previous Indonesian military campaigns.

One of the purposes of this venture was to capture Fretilin-commander Xanana Gusmao, but the army did not succeed.

According to the permanent representative of Fretilin in Australia, Agio Perreira, about a thousand Red Berets, Indonesian paratroopers, were brought from Java to two bases in East-Timor, Los Palos and Baucau, in the second week of july of this year. These Red Berets too, are supposed to arrest and kill Fretilin-leaders , in particular Xanana Gusmao.

This intensification of Indonesian military efforts is probably caused by their wish to destroy the guerrilla forces of Fretilin before Mr. Perez de Cuellar, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has finished his final report.

For years Indonesia has been trying to deal Fretilin a final blow, but so far in vain. Fighting continues, and according to Fretilin-claims, 132

Indonesian soldiers were killed between november 1986 and january 1987; 63 weapons were captured by Falintil, the Fretilin armed forces, in this period. This information is given in a 83 page long Fretilin-document, smuggled out of East-Timor (Press Release, Lisbon 22 june 1987).

On 21 november 1986, a Falintil Unit launched an attack on one of the Indonesian Security Posts on the road from Lospalos to Iliomar. 34 Indonesian soldiers were killed in this attack and one got wounded. Their arms were captured by the guerrilla's. Two days later, on november 23rd, the Indonesians interrogated the population of Iliomar. The people considered 'suspects' were taken to the office of the District Military Command (KODIM). During another interrogation these suspects were severely beaten up and tortured with electric shocks. At the end of february / beginning of march this year, the Indonesian troops came to Iliomar and 17 Indonesian soldiers armed with bayonets, each killed a Timorese civilian. Among the 17 victims who were murdered are the district-head (camat) and the king (raja) of Iliomar.

Xanana, the chief commander of Falintil, adds to this information:

"This kind of reprisals against defenceless people (by the military occupying forces) always takes place after the guerrilla's launched an attack. The facts prove this. It is clear that the reprisals serve the following goals. In the first place the reprisals are taken to terrorize the people even more. Secondly, the occupying forces try to impress the population with the idea that they would not suffer from these reprisals if there wasn't an Armed Resistance Movement going on. It is very clear that the Indonesians want to create feelings of hate and resentment against the guerrilla's. Thirdly, by the reprisals the Indonesians try to force the guerrilla's to reconsider the fact that there cannot be killed one Indonesian soldier without a Timorese civilian being murdered too".

(Fretilin Press Release, Lisbon 16 july 1987).

People in Railaco were also tortured after commander Mau-Caro and his company of Falintil were on their way to by-pass Dili at the beginning of this year (february/march 1987). As a reaction to this movement the Indonesians mobilized a large part of their forces stationed in Dili. Also citizens of Dili were put in an operation to wipe out the guerrilla's, who just wanted to pass by. The operation launched by the Indonesians was without any result. Being accused of hiding the guerrilla's, the Indonesians made reprisals against the people of Railaco; some inhabitants of Railaco were tortured (Fretilin Press Release, Lisbon 22 june 1987).

Mr. Chaiman,

It is obvious that the Indonesians fear the relations between Falintil-forces and the East-Timorese, for after the Indonesian invasion tens of thousands of East-Timorese left the small areas under Indonesian control to be with Fretilin. In the beginning it was easy for them to survive, because they got the support from the people in the towns, who gave them what they needed. Only after the massive bombardments in 1977/78 East-Timorese were forced to leave the mountainous areas and had to surrender. Tens of thousands of them died from hunger at the time as a result of the Indonesian policy to destroy harvests and crops.

From early 1979 onwards, over 150.000 East-Timorese were forcibly and arbitrarily moved from their birth place and regrouped indiscriminately in 150 settlement areas (Daerah pemukiman). These settlement camps are called concentration camps by the East-Timorese people themselves. They are subjected to strict military control and the inhabitants are not free to leave these camps. They are even not free to work in the surrounding fields because the Indonesians fear they will provide Falintil guerrilla-fighters with food.

As an East-Timorese wrote in a document dated january 1987, also smuggled out of the country:

"Everybody knows that our guerrilla forces are fighting for liberation of East-Timor. The people of East-Timor know that we would even be more silenced and repressed if there was no resistance movement in our valleys and woods (...) This feeling is dominating the hearts of the people of East-Timor. And it is therefore (in general) that, in different forms, we all join the armed resistance. This is something the enemy knows" (Fretilin Press Release, Lisbon 22 june 1987).

Quite often East-Timorese have been arrested by the Indonesians because they are suspected of having helped Falintil in some way. Among them are functionaries as Aleixo Guterres, representative of UDT and district-head (camat) of Maubisse. He was captured by the intelligence forces of the army and turned over to the Command of Nanggalas in Dili where he was tortured. The nanggalas are troops of the para-commando regiment, Kopassandha, who have received special training in killing and violence; these red-berets are the most notorious killers among the Indonesian troops in East-Timor. Aleixo Guterres was accused (in october 1986) of supplying the guerrilla's with food, clothes and medicines.

Joaquim Guterres, commander of a company of hansips (Timorese soldiers) and village leader (kepala desa) of Venilale, was accused of hiding guerrilla's in his house and of supplying them with medicines. He was cruelly beaten out of his house by nanggalas and deportated to a prison

in Baucau. He was released after having paid a ransom of buffaloes.
Joao Martins was arrested in november 1986. He was a former leader of Apodeti, the small East-Timorese party that was in favour of integration with Indonesia in 1975. He is head of the Provincial Department of Social Affairs and was kept imprisoned for three days and interrogated by officers from Jakarta who are members of a Command of Nanggalas in Dili (Fretilin Press Release, 22 june 1987).
It is clear from these Indonesian accusations, that they fear Fretilin-support even among those who previously seemed to have chosen the Indonesian side (in 1979 Joaquim Guterres was decorated by the Indonesian army for his services during the occupation of Baucau in 1975/76).
The Indonesian colonizers are well aware that antipathy against the Indonesians is widespread among the East-Timorese. They are now trying to win 'the hearts and minds' of the East-Timorese by working on their 'development'. The Indonesians claim to bring education, health, transport and prosperity to what they call 'a backward people'. As if they haven't learned anything from the history of colonization and the struggle against it, they now use exactly the same arguments as were used by the Dutch in the first half of this century as legitimation for their colonial occupation of the Netherlands Indies (now called Indonesia). However, The right to self-determination is not negotiable with schools and bridges.

Mr. Chairman,
Anacoreta Correia, member of the Portuguese parliament for the Christian Democratic Party, was allowed to visit East-Timor from 11 july to 15 july 1986. In his report, presented to the East-Timor Commission of the Portuguese parliament, he comes to the conclusion "that rejection and mistrust towards Indonesia are generalized feelings throughout East-Timor".
According to Correia, "the psychological condition of the place (Dili) is obviously bad. It is obvious that the Timorese reject Indonesia, especially certain aspects of government that have to do with the army and the security forces. The whole East-Timorese population seems to be traumatized (...) Correia says that he heard many accounts of persecution, of a very tight control, of denunciations and of the fact that people are afraid to talk. His impression is that the Indonesians want to bet on the new generation and avoid conflict as much as possible with the generation that lived with the Portuguese. But he expresses his doubts about Indonesia's ability to gain confidence of the East-Timorese. The population that lived with the Portuguese puts all its hope in returning to Portugal one day. The International Red Cross (ICRC) says that these people live in constant anxiety and want to leave for Portugal as soon possible (...)".

"In other sectors of the population, such as the farmers, one notices a lot of fear", according to this Christian-democratic member of the Portuguese parliament, who "found out, that it still seems to be impossible to visit military cemetries. Captured guerrillas seem to be in good health, which to the visitors is a surprising sign of their great capacity to adapt to the territory. Correia says that his trips by helicopter allowed him to confirm the Fretilin maps on the Indonesian military positions in East-Timor. (...) He states that the guerrillas enjoy widespread support or at least the sympathy of large sectors of the population. Antipathy against the Indonesians is hardly hidden". (Excerpts of report on visit to East-Timor in july 1986 by Miguel Anacoreta Correia (M.P.) presented to the East-Timor Commission of the Portuguese parliament).

Mr. Chairman,

In the past twelve years, Indonesia did not succeed in putting an end to the resistance of the Fretilin liberation movement. Nor dit it succeed in making itself loved by the East-Timorese population. The sympathy for the liberation struggle against the colonial occupation has not diminished. This is obvious from:

- testimonies of East-Timorese refugees and the former bishop Mgr. Da Costa Lopes;
- the report of the Portuguese member of parliament, Anacoreta Correia, who visited East-Timor last year;
- the fact that big parts of the population are forced to live in concentration camps;
- the fact that East-Timor is not freely accesible.

Correia also made it clear that his freedom was restricted in many ways when he visited East-Timor last year. In his report "he complains about constant excessive security forces around him not only during his traveling, but also at the hotel. He says that the security forces intimidated people who would have liked to come and talk with him, but did not dare to show up. The security forces also took away all naturalness and ease to his contacts".

Indonesia tries to fabricate its own story about East-Timor. It can do so only because it tries to monopolize the information coming out from East-Timor. Already before the Indonesian invasion there was a deliberate Indonesian strategy to keep out independent observers from East-Timor. Five TV journalists from Australia were killed by Indonesian troops as they captured Balibo in october 1975 and the only remaining journalist, Roger East, was murdered on the day of the invasion.

Andrée Feillard, journalist of Asiaweek, who had visited East-Timor in

1985, was invited to travel with the Indonesian minister of Foreign Affairs, Mochtar Kusumaatmadja, on his recent election visit to East-Timor, but she refused on the grounds that it would be a frustrating waste of time and she could not take a re-run of her experience of 1985. On that occasion she could not wait to get out after six days. She found East-Timor a very sad place, where she was 'minded' the whole time and the atmosphere was extremely distrustful.

Mr. Chairman,
None of the selected number of people who were given permission to visit East-Timor was able to travel freely throughout East-Timor. In our opinion the Decolonization Committee should seek to send an independent fact-finding commission to East-Timor. Falintil-commander Xanana Gusmao has proposed this (in his message to the Non-Aligned Foreign Ministers Conference in Luanda, september 1985) and last year Fretilin-representative Mr. José Ramos Horta also proposed this to this Special Committee. When the Indonesian representative will deny everything that is said here, it should be remembered, that those who speak in solidarity with the East-Timorese, want such a fact-finding commission and free access to East-Timor in general, but the Indonesians restrict the possibilities to visit their colony, obviously because they have something to hide.

Mr. Chairman,
Of course the Decolonization Committee should do the utmost to create the conditions that the people of East-Timor can practise their right of self-determination. The war is going on and neither the Indonesian military nor the Fretilin guerrilla fighters are able to gain the victory - as is recognized by Fretilin, which is in favour of a political-diplomatic solution to the conflict (see: Fretilin Peace Plan).
At the moment UN-Secretary General Mr. Perez de Cuellar is charged with finding a solution. Talks are being held in which the former colonizer Portugal and the present colonizer Indonesia participate. Representatives of the people from East-Timor are excluded from these discussions.

Mr. Chairman,
The least that this Committee should try to accomplish, is to bring about the participation of representatives of the people of Maubere, the people of East-Timor, in all negotiations and deliberations regarding their own future.

Thank you for your attention. New York, 13 August 1987